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SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA RECOGNIZES KOSOVO

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¶1. (SBU) The GOA Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade announced at mid-day on February 19 that it formally recognized the Republic of Kosovo as an Independent State. The announcement noted that both the United States and the U.K. had issued their recognitions (earlier in the day a DFAT official told us that the GOA was awaiting the U.K.'s announcement before proceeding with its own). The GOA declaration stated that the protection of minorities rights and safety must be key priorities for Kosovo. Text of Australia's announcement follows in para 2.

¶2. (U) Begin Text:

AUSTRALIA RECOGNIZES THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

Australia has today formally recognized the Republic of Kosovo as an independent state, Kosovo declared independence on 17 February 2008. Australia respects the decision of the people of Kosovo. The United States and the United Kingdom have also indicated their recognition of Kosovo's new sovereignty, and a number of others are expected to do so soon.

It has been a long and difficult road to peace for Kosovo since the devastating conflict in the late 1990s. The United Nations and NATO have worked tirelessly since 1999 to assist in setting up self-governing institutions and to help the people of Kosovo rebuild their lives. Much remains to be done, and it is important that the international community, in particular the United Nations and European Community, continue efforts to bring about a lasting peaceful future for Kosovo and the region. Australia wishes the Government of Kosovo well in the tasks ahead. Ensuring the rights and safety of minorities, as well as protection of cultural heritage sites, must be key priorities for Kosovo. Australia strongly urges the leaders of Kosovo and Serbia to demonstrate the resolve and political determination to settle their differences peacefully. Australia hopes the Serbian Government will continue to engage with European and other partners in the interests of stability and economic development of the region as a whole.

Australia will soon consider the establishment of diplomatic relations with Kosovo.

End Text.